

Eric Andersen *Today Is The Highway* (Vanguard Records)
by Peter Stone Brown

I'd already seen Eric Andersen play quite a few times, usually at Sunday afternoon "Broadside Hoots" at New York City's Village Gate when his debut album finally appeared on Vanguard Records, a label known for taking its time getting records to the public. Andersen had been introduced in 1964 on a sampler album *New Folks Volume 2*, that featured four new singers including Phil Ochs who ended up recording for Vanguard's main competitor (at the time) Elektra. Two songs from *New Folks* "Come To My Bedside" and "Dusty Box Car Wall" were included on *Today Is The Highway*.

It could be said that Eric Andersen was the first of the "new Dylans." He played guitar and harmonica, and his lyrics were poetic, and the melody of the title track was reminiscent of Dylan's "Tomorrow Is A Long Time." Andersen's singing style however was much gentler and sweeter and his performances less frenzied. Andersen also finger-picked the majority of his songs.

Back then there seemed to be requisite themes for folk albums, a love song, a ramblin' or train song, a song about the land, and a tribute song, and the album has all of them.

Andersen's specialty however was personal romantic ballads such as "Come To My Bedside," "Everything Ain't Been Said," and "Time For My Returning." He had a way of singing at key times these real high notes that would just get inside you.

In 1965, this album stayed on the turntable for a long time. Fifty years later "Come To My Bedside" and "Everything Ain't Been Said" still hold up. For Andersen, the best songs were yet to come and it wouldn't be long before they did.